

Chapter 10

Research Trends in Discourses of Globalization and Cultural Identity



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Abstract The chapter critiques dominant discourses of cultural identities, environmental influences and forces of globalization. The author argues that, as imagined communities, national identities may well represent this idea in our collective memories and myths. Globalisation has contributed, among other things, to the strengthening of various cultural identities: religious, national, ethnic, and geographic. Current research trends in discourses of globalization and cultural identity demonstrate the nexus between cultural identities and environment. The chapter demonstrates that cultural identity research reflects a rich variety of phenomena in one's culture and environment affecting our identities, within cultural, social, emotional and behavioural spheres, and our quality of life and chosen life styles.

Keywords Discourses of cultural identity · Ethnic identity · Geographic identity · Globalisation · Global culture · Global identity · Human rights · Identity crisis · Identity politics · Ideology · Institutional identity · Language · Local identity · Migrant children · Multiple identities · National identity · Nation-building process · Religious identity · Social justice

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 Defining Globalization

With reference to the nexus between cultural identity and globalisation we need to examine critically these two evolving globally and locally significant constructs. To begin with, globalization is not an easy term to define. There are numerous competing and contested definitions of globalization. The problem lies both in defining globalization, and understanding and critiquing its intended and unintended consequences on nation-states cultural identities globally. Definitions of globalization

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have varied from one author to another. Some have described it as a process, while others a condition, a system, a force or an age. In the last few years, there has been a virtual explosion of interest in globalization by comparative education scholars, and policy analysts (Appadurai, 1990; Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002; Zajda, 2021) What is 'globalization'? Is it a market-driven process, propelled by forces of consumerism that imposes a neo-liberal economic regime of trade relations, and which represents the ubiquity of global capitalism? If so, is it spearheaded by multinational conglomerates? Is it connected to the discourse about modernity (Robertson, 1992; Zajda, 2022)? Is it also driven by intensified modes of competition that compresses 'the time, and space aspects of social relations' (Giddens, 1990)? These are some of the questions arising from a critical perception of multi-dimensional globalization. In general sense, the phenomenon of 'globalization' refers to individuals and institutions around the globe being more connected to each other than ever before, to a quantum-like pace of the international flow of communication, capital, knowledge and other socially valued commodities, to consumer goods and services produced in one part of the world, and being increasingly available in all parts of the world, and to shifts in political and economic systems influenced by forces of globalization.

The term 'globalization' is used so widely today in social theory, policy, and education research, that it has become a cliché. As a construct, 'globalization' has acquired considerable emotive force among pro and anti-globalization researchers. Some scholars view it as a process that is beneficial—a key to future world economic development—and also inevitable and irreversible. Others regard it with hostility, even fear, believing that it increases inequality within and between nations, threatens employment and living standards and thwarts social progress. Economic 'globalization' is a historical process, the result of human innovation and technological progress. It refers to the increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows. The term sometimes also refers to the movement of people, in terms of labour, and desirable knowledge, including technological skills across international borders.

Do advocates of globalization desire participation, opening dialogical space, promoting cooperative power, or social equality? Evidence on this question resides with the former. Globalization has come to be associated with exacerbating social inequality, exemplified in the proverbial race to the bottom. In this race un-tethered capitalists seek to perfect a socially toxic formula that maximizes production and profit while minimizing worker and environmental protection. Popular and scholarly dialogue generally focus on these events, whether it be the outsourcing of labour from developed countries, the in-sourcing of capitalism that exploits local people and ecosystems, or the subsequent trade issues that emerge from these global outflows and inflows. Increasingly what is needed, however, is study of the systemic complexities associated with these relationships in light of the myriad examples in the social world, rather than myopic attention to a case or detached theorizing about an abstract trend. Progress in understanding globalization will certainly be made when the macro and micro can be viewed in light of each other, each analysis working towards emergent and tenuous theories about globalization. To know something of globalization is to look carefully, closely, and locally at its

manifestations, uncovering some element of its meaning, unearthing some dimension of its effects. While such an archaeological method of knowledge development is tediously slow, hampered by the shifting qualities of globalization itself, it provides some basis on which to extend an analysis of what globalization is and what it portends.

Ritzer and Rojek (2020) offered a useful analytical lens through which to view the macro and micro areas of globalization. Advocates of glocalization see these new syntheses as progress, an effect being people identifying as one. Opponents like Ritzer, however, characterize these same changes as illustrations of grobalization. Grobalization minimizes and trivializes the differences among people and places, affords them less ability to adapt and innovate, directs social processes that are deterministic and dominant, and represents people in commodified ways Heuristically, grobalization *others* people in the world such that they are no longer agents of and for themselves, but acted on by the ominously large and rationalized order of a global world. What is most troubling in considering major discourses about globalization in the social mainstream is the general failure to explore its incongruities, and worse, the opposition to engage in informed dialogue about presumptions embedded in globalization. Globalization and its neo-liberal ideology has been reified as *how things are* without a careful examination and subsequent debate of *both* (1) the ontological claims, diverse perspectives on what is happening and (2) its broad, social effects, along with views about possible alternatives to the current state of affairs.

What globalization has failed to create, in the case of China and many other societies who are major players in this economic system, however, is a robust dialogue about the nature, effects, and alternatives associated with its growth. Relying on what is narrowly *true*, in particular the principles of unsustainable market economics, globalization has jeopardized social stability, such as a safe environment, equitable access to resources, and protection of human labour, in the quest for greater profits. What is perhaps most disconcerting about this trend is not the effects that such obedience to often implicit principles has caused, as if these were not disturbing enough, but the concomitant subverting of free, open, and diverse discourse about the processes at work and their aims.

10.2 Cultural Identities

Cultural identity, as construct, and discussed in Chap. 1, refers to one's sense of belonging to a particular culture, based on various cultural categories, including language, nation, place, nationality, and various other individual characteristics, shaped by political and social dimensions of one's culture. Nationalism, argued Anderson (1991), is a narrative of national origins that creates imagined community amongst the citizens of the modern state. Anderson explains the sense in which the nation is an 'imagined community':

The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations . . . It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm . . . Finally, it is imagined as community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as deep, horizontal comradeship (Anderson, 1991).

As ‘imagined communities’, national identities may well represent in our collective memories and myths (Anderson, 1991). With reference to the construction of national identity, and collective memory, it has been argued that such ideas build on ‘the emphasis on a common history and history has always to do with remembrance and memory’ (De Cillia et al., 1999, p. 154). The concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ were examined by numerous scholars, including, Anderson (1991), Smith (2001), and Zajda (2017). They critiqued some of the assumptions about the discursive construction of nations and national identities. Their analysis of ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ was informed primarily by the works of Anderson (1991), Bourdieu & Passeron, (1990), Hall (1997) and Smith (2001).

As discussed in Chap. 1, globalisation has contributed, among other things, to ‘the strengthening of various cultural identities: religious, national, ethnic, and geographic’ (Castells, 2006, 2010). The construct of cultural identity is associated with a reification of culture (similar to Marx’s notion of ‘reification’), which becomes a defining feature of the dominant discourse on identity (Bauman, 1996). Reification is the process of attributing concrete form to an abstract concept. Reification was used by Marx to describe a form of ‘social consciousness in which human relations come to be identified with the physical properties of things, thereby acquiring an appearance of naturalness and inevitability’ (Burriss, 1988). Using the concept of reification, Marx tried to explain why workers accepted their labour and wages exploitation as natural.

Overall, forces of globalisation, together with global marketing have transformed the formation of one’s cultural identity, and has manufactured a new consumerist and a global materialistic culture of commodification of the self. Zajda (2021) discussed critically the commodification of the self, within the construction of cultural identity. It is also argued that language plays a significant role in identity discourses, and is intrinsically connected to personal, national, and ethnic identity (Zajda, 2022).

10.3 Research Trends in Discourses of Globalization and Cultural Identity

Current research trends in discourses of globalization and cultural identity demonstrate the nexus between cultural identities and environment. We need to accept that we, as individuals, are located in a particular culture, where our identities are defined and shaped by major agencies of socialization, such as the family, the

neighbourhood, the peers, the school, and the media. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) definitive and popular model explains in depth, from a sociological perspective of major how agencies of socialization contribute to our identities, attitudes, values and behaviour patters. Individuals' particular attitudes, values, and behavior, including biases and discriminatory practices, are usually acquired, and shaped by a number of major agencies of socialization, such as the family, the peers, the school, the neighbourhood, and the media. Bronfenbrenner, influenced by his sociological perspectives of major agencies of socialization, and Lev Vygotsky's theory of language development within one's environment, as well as Kurt Lewin's study of human social behaviour, refined his earlier Ecological Systems Model (1979), by developing his new *Bioecological model of development*. The model combined both genetics and environment, which is reminiscent of Eysenck (1982), helps to explain more fully the complexity of social and cultural interactions contributing to human development and cultural identities.

Cultural identity research reflects a rich variety of phenomena in one's culture and environment affecting our identities, and our chosen life styles. In 'Major Discourses of Cultural Identities' Zajda (2022) examines critically the ambivalent and problematic relationship between the state, globalisation and the construction of cultural identity. His research findings demonstrate that language is intrinsically connected to personal, national, and ethnic identity. In terms of time, location and culture, the process of re-defining and consolidation of cultural identities has been one of a continuous social, cultural, political and historical transformation. He argues that global marketing affecting the formation of one's cultural identity has manufactured a new consumerist and a global materialistic culture of 'commodification of the self'.

Suzanne Majhanovich (Chap. 2, this volume) analyses Canadian identity. In 'The evolution of Canadian Identity as reflected through the Ontario secondary school curriculum', she argues that the concept of Canadian identity has evolved over the years from one highly influenced by Canada's colonial ties to a cultural identity that draws on the contributions from its diverse population. The author has discusses how Canadian identity has evolved and developed as reflected in the school curriculum in Ontario, particularly that curriculum dealing with the subject disciplines English, French as a second language, and History and Social Sciences.

In 'The globalization of human rights for a global citizenship: New challenges' José Noronha Rodrigues (Chap. 3, this volume) discusses conceptual interconnection between globalization and human rights. He argues for the need to combine the concepts of globalization, human rights, and global citizenship within organizational operations. The author concludes in his research findings that forces of globalisation have generated significant changes in the political, legal, and social sphere of global citizens, so that new and improved human rights are required for the dignity and defence of the human person and, in particular, for the collective rights of humanity, regardless of the geographical circumscription of the State in which we find ourselves.

Nitza Davidovitch et al. (Chap. 4, this volume) offer us a futuristic vision of leisure in a global culture. In 'Adult studies as a leisure activity: From exigency and choice', the authors argue that the research literature on leisure indicates that the

forms of leisure activity utilized depend on the learners' socio-demographic background and hence also on the life patterns to which they have become habituated, according to the continuity theory and the serious leisure perspective. Their survey, involving some 234 respondents with a diverse socio-demographic background, examined socio-demographic differences in gender, age, religiosity, marital status, level of education, and socio-economic status (SES). The authors' research findings demonstrated that respondents who chose to study Torah as a leisure activity were found to be mostly men, religious, and married. In contrast, the respondents who chose non-Torah enrichment studies as a leisure activity (the control group) were mainly women, mostly secular (non-religious), and non-married (single, divorced, or widows). Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that studying at leisure may require a certain level of financial security.

Joseph Zajda (2022) provides a case study of ways of constructing national identity by means of history textbooks in schools. In 'The discursive construction of national identity in prescribed history textbooks' he examines critically the process of identity formation. His data analysis of interviews with Russian history teachers demonstrated that most respondents agreed that the national identity was formed through the study of historical narratives, depicting significant events in the history of Russia. In addition, most respondents agreed, which was indicative of the political climate in the RF, that the primary value of history education in schools was education for national identity, patriotism, and citizenship education. The author concludes that his data analysis demonstrated the significance of ideology in discourse analysis data of history education, where nationalism and patriotism were defining, and continue to do so, the structure and the content of prescribed Russian history textbooks in schools across the RF. Discourse analysis data re-affirms the significance of the role of historical narratives in the development of historical consciousness and national identity in school history textbooks.

In another case study, Suzanne Majhanovich (Chap. 6, this volume) analyses how forces of globalisation and migrations have impacted on cultural identities of the newly arrived migrant children and adolescents in the school setting. In 'Canada's response to the Syrian refugee crisis. easing the transition to integration', the author critiques a program organised by a local school in London (Ontario) to ease transition to the Canadian education system for the migrant children with little or no knowledge of English. GENTLE, or the Guided Entry to New Teaching and Learning Experiences Centre has been designed to help the migrant children and adolescents in the school setting.

Globally, according to Sharon Tzur Adi Katz & Nitza Davidovitch (Chap. 7, this volume), social networks, learning technologies, and 'digital teaching tools are gradually becoming major learning and work tools, integrated in the different educational systems':

The integration of digital technologies has changed the classical face-to-face classroom study space and transformed teachers and lecturers into figures that guide, direct, and mediate between the students and the study contents by means of an array of teaching methods (Sharon Tzur, Adi Katz & Nitza Davidovitch, Chap. 7, this volume).

In their 'The impact of social networks on student motivation and achievement', Sharon Tzur, Adi Katz & Nitza Davidovitch examine association between the contribution of social networks to social-academic interaction and the impact of both on learning motivation and academic achievements. The authors also discuss social media and various social media platforms, which influence one's evolving cultural identity. One of the examples used is Facebook, as a globally popular social network, with more than 2 billion users worldwide. The authors conclude that since social networks shape and construct cultural identities, reflecting the changing dynamics of evolving cultural identities, there is a need to include 'social networks in learning, which is particularly important for Generation Z, since a significant part of their life activities already takes place on social networks' (Tzur, Adi Katz & Nitza Davidovitch, Chap. 7, this volume).

Students from refugee backgrounds face many challenges, affecting their cultural identities, as a consequence of their previous life experience, and shaping their successful transition in a new school setting. In 'Contributing factors to refugee children's education and academic performance' Nina Maadad, I Gusti Ngurah Darmawan, and Salah Kutieleh (Chap. 8, this volume) discuss factors contributing to the education of Arabic Speaking refugee children. They identify how individual factors such as gender, country of birth, years absent from school, family factors such as parents' education and involvement, and other relevant social factors.

Margaret Winzer and Kas Mazurek (Chap. 9, this volume) when examining inclusive schooling for students with disabilities note that the core ideals are rooted in human rights. However, they argue that there exists a little consensus on the practices related to educational placement and special education. Despite the combined policy efforts of various international organizations to elevate full inclusion, as the governing ideology to desegregate and deinstitutionalize students with disabilities, the 'inclusive agenda has not seen any great advances since the Salamanca agreement laid down the parameters':

Different understandings of inclusive schooling translate into different implications and consequences for action. Full inclusion remains an advocacy priority, stalled at the level of discourse. Many countries appear unable or unwilling to undertake the obligations necessary to meet the targets of Article 24 (Margaret Winzer & Kas Mazurek, Chap. 9, this volume).

Finally, in 'Research trends in discourses of globalization and cultural identity', Joseph Zajda offers a synthesis of cultural identities affected by various environmental factors and forces of globalisation.

The above discussed diversity of cultural identity research reflects a complexity and variety of situations in our lives, culture and environment, which are constantly defining, shaping and changing identities, within specific cultural, social, emotional, behavioural spheres, together with chosen life styles, and our quality of life. Major discourses dealing with the construction of cultural identities, both locally and globally, demonstrate that our identities, as discussed in Chap. 1, are both ascribed and constructed identities, and embedded in our cultures. One could argue that it is possible to combine both traditional singular social identity, and other acquired

identities. We are likely to have multiple identities, based on race, ethnicity, gender, languages, education, age, sexual orientation, occupation, life style, and social class (SES).

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